

RANDOM VERSE



Flower studies by Leonardo da Vinci

DE AEGYPTO

I even I, am he who knoweth the roads
Through the sky, and the wind thereof is my body.

I have beheld the Lady of Life,
I, even I, who fly with the swallows.

Green and gray is her raiment,
Trailing along the wind.

I, even I, am he who knoweth the roads
Through the sky, and the wind thereof is my body.

Manus animam pinxit,
My pen is in my hand

To write the acceptable word....
My mouth to chant the pure singing!

Who hath the mouth to receive it,
The song of the Lotus of Kumi?

I, even I, am he who knoweth the roads
Through the sky, and the wind thereof is my body.

I am flame that riseth in the sun,
I, even I, who fly with the swallows.

The moon is upon my forehead,
The winds are under my lips.

The moon is a great pearl in the waters of sapphire,
Cool to my fingers the flowing waters.

I, even I, am he who knoweth the roads
Through the sky, and the wind thereof is my body.

I will return to the halls of the flowing,
Of the truth of the children of Ashu.

I, even I, am he who knoweth the roads
Of the sky, and the wind thereof is my body.

On the Beach at Night Alone

On the beach at night alone,
As the old mother sways her to and fro singing her husky song,
As I watch the bright stars shining, I think a thought of the clef
of the universes and of the future.

A vast similitude interlocks all,
All spheres, grown, ungrown, small, large, suns, moons, planets,
All distances of place however wide,
All distances of time, all inanimate forms,
All souls, all living bodies though they be ever so different, or in
different worlds,
All gaseous, watery, vegetable, mineral processes, the fishes, the brutes,
All nations, colors, barbarisms, civilizations, languages,
All identities that have existed or may exist on this globe, or any globe,
All lives and deaths, all of the past, present, future,
This vast similitude spans them, and always has spann'd,
And shall forever span them and compactly hold and enclose them.

From: *Leaves of Grass*, by Walt Whitman
EBook #1322

Court Lady Standing Under a Plum Tree

Autumn winds roll through the dry leaves
On her garments;
Autumn birds shiver
Athwart star-hung skies.
Under the blossoming plum-tree,
She expresses the pilgrimage
Of grey souls passing,
Athwart love's scarlet maples
To the ash-strewn summit of death.

From: *Japanese Prints*, by John Gould Fletcher
EBook #27199

SEA LULLABY

The old moon is tarnished
With smoke of the flood,
The dead leaves are varnished
With color like blood,

A treacherous smiler
With teeth white as milk,
A savage beguiler
In sheathings of silk,

The sea creeps to pillage,
She leaps on her prey;
A child of the village
Was murdered to-day.

She came up to meet him
In a smooth golden cloak,
She choked him and beat him
To death, for a joke.

Her bright locks were tangled,
She shouted for joy,
With one hand she strangled
A strong little boy.

Now in silence she lingers
Beside him all night
To wash her long fingers
In silvery light.

From *Nets to Catch the Wind*, by Elinor Wylie
EBook #6682

FAREWELL TO THE MUSE.

1.

Thou Power! who hast ruled me through Infancy's days,
Young offspring of Fancy, 'tis time we should part;
Then rise on the gale this the last of my lays,
The coldest effusion which springs from my heart.

2.

This bosom, responsive to rapture no more,
Shall hush thy wild notes, nor implore thee to sing;
The feelings of childhood, which taught thee to soar,
Are wafted far distant on Apathy's wing.

3.

Though simple the themes of my rude flowing Lyre,
Yet even these themes are departed for ever;
No more beam the eyes which my dream could inspire,
My visions are flown, to return,--alas, never!

4.

When drain'd is the nectar which gladdens the bowl,
How vain is the effort delight to prolong!
When cold is the beauty which dwelt in my soul, [ii]
What magic of Fancy can lengthen my song?

5.

Can the lips sing of Love in the desert alone,
Of kisses and smiles which they now must resign?
Or dwell with delight on the hours that are flown?
Ah, no! for those hours can no longer be mine.

6.

Can they speak of the friends that I lived but to love? [iii]
Ah, surely Affection ennobles the strain!
But how can my numbers in sympathy move,
When I scarcely can hope to behold them again?

7.

Can I sing of the deeds which my Fathers have done,
And raise my loud harp to the fame of my Sires?
For glories like theirs, oh, how faint is my tone!
For Heroes' exploits how unequal my fires!

8.

Untouch'd, then, my Lyre shall reply to the blast--
'Tis hush'd; and my feeble endeavours are o'er;
And those who have heard it will pardon the past,
When they know that its murmurs shall vibrate no more.

9.

And soon shall its wild erring notes be forgot,
Since early affection and love is o'ercast:
Oh! blest had my Fate been, and happy my lot,
Had the first strain of love been the dearest, the last.

10.

Farewell, my young Muse! since we now can ne'er meet; [iv]
If our songs have been languid, they surely are few:
Let us hope that the present at least will be sweet--
The present--which seals our eternal Adieu.

1807. [First published, 1832.]

from:

Byron's Poetical Works, Vol. I, by Lord Byron
EBook #8861

THE TWO SEASONS.

Summer, on himself intent,
Passed without, for nothing caring
Save his own high festival.
My windows, blind and winkless staring,
Wondered what the pageant meant,
Nor ever understood at all.
And oh, the pains of sentiment!
The loneliness beyond all bearing ...
Mucus and spleen and gall!

But now that grey November peers
In at my fire-bright window pane?
And all its misty spires and trees
Loom in upon me through the rain
And question of the light that cheers
The room within--now my soul sees
Life, where of old were sepulchres;
And in these new-found sympathies
Sinks petty hopes and loves and fears,
And knows that life is not in vain.

From *The Burning Wheel*, by Aldous Huxley
EBook #47912

I Shall Not Care

When I am dead and over me bright April
Shakes out her rain-drenched hair,
Though you should lean above me broken-hearted,
I shall not care.

I shall have peace, as leafy trees are peaceful
When rain bends down the bough,
And I shall be more silent and cold-hearted
Than you are now.

From: *Love Songs*, by Sara Teasdale
Etext #442

The Mocking-Bird

Superb and sole, upon a pluméd spray
That o'er the general leafage boldly grew,
He summ'd the woods in song; or typic drew
The watch of hungry hawks, the lone dismay
Of languid doves when long their lovers stray,
And all birds' passion-plays that sprinkle dew
At morn in brake or bosky avenue.
Whate'er birds did or dreamed, this bird could say.
Then down he shot, bounced airily along
The sward, twitched in a grasshopper, made song
Midflight, perched, prinked, and to his art again.
Sweet Science, this large riddle read me plain:
How may the death of that dull insect be
The life of yon trim Shakspeare on the tree?

From: *Bob - The Story of Our Mocking-bird* by Sidney Lanier
EBook #47924

ON THE BALCONY

IN front of the sombre mountains, a faint, lost
ribbon of rainbow;
And between us and it, the thunder;
And down below in the green wheat, the labourers
Stand like dark stumps, still in the green wheat.

You are near to me, and your naked feet in their
sandals,
And through the scent of the balcony's naked
timber
I distinguish the scent of your hair: so now the
limber
Lightning falls from heaven.

Adown the pale-green glacier river floats
A dark boat through the gloom--and whither?
The thunder roars. But still we have each other!
The naked lightnings in the heavens dither
And disappear--what have we but each other?
The boat has gone.

From: *Look! We Have Come Through!*, by D. H. Lawrence
eBook #23394

XXXII

Heart of mine, if all the altars
Of the ages stood before me,
Not one pure enough nor sacred
Could I find to lay this white, white
Rose of love upon. 5

I who am not great enough to
Love thee with this mortal body
So impassionate with ardour,
But oh, not too small to worship
While the sun shall shine,-- 10

I would build a fragrant temple
To thee, in the dark green forest,
Of red cedar and fine sandal,
And there love thee with sweet service
All my whole life long. 15

I would freshen it with flowers,
And the piney hill-wind through it
Should be sweetened with soft fervours
Of small prayers in gentle language
Thou wouldst smile to hear. 20

And a tinkling Eastern wind-bell,
With its fluttering inscription,
From the rafters with bronze music
Should retard the quiet fleeting
Of uncounted hours. 25

And my hero, while so human,
Should be even as the gods are,
In that shrine of utter gladness,
With the tranquil stars above it
And the sea below. 30

from: *Sappho: One Hundred Lyrics*, by Bliss Carman
EBook #12389

The City of Falling Leaves

Leaves fall,
Brown leaves,
Yellow leaves streaked with brown.
They fall,
Flutter,
Fall again.
The brown leaves,
And the streaked yellow leaves,
Loosen on their branches
And drift slowly downwards.
One,
One, two, three,
One, two, five.
All Venice is a falling of Autumn leaves --
Brown,
And yellow streaked with brown.

"That sonnet, Abate,
Beautiful,
I am quite exhausted by it.
Your phrases turn about my heart
And stifle me to swooning.
Open the window, I beg.
Lord! What a strumming of fiddles and mandolins!
'Tis really a shame to stop indoors.
Call my maid, or I will make you lace me yourself.
Fie, how hot it is, not a breath of air!
See how straight the leaves are falling.
Marianna, I will have the yellow satin caught up with silver fringe,
It peeps out delightfully from under a mantle.
Am I well painted to-day, 'caro Abate mio'?
You will be proud of me at the 'Ridotto', hey?
Proud of being 'Cavalier Servente' to such a lady?"
"Can you doubt it, 'Bellissima Contessa'?
A pinch more rouge on the right cheek,
And Venus herself shines less . . ."
"You bore me, Abate,
I vow I must change you!
A letter, Achmet?
Run and look out of the window, Abate.
I will read my letter in peace."
The little black slave with the yellow satin turban
Gazes at his mistress with strained eyes.
His yellow turban and black skin
Are gorgeous -- barbaric.
The yellow satin dress with its silver flashings

Lies on a chair
Beside a black mantle and a black mask.
Yellow and black,
Gorgeous -- barbaric.
The lady reads her letter,
And the leaves drift slowly
Past the long windows.
"How silly you look, my dear Abate,
With that great brown leaf in your wig.
Pluck it off, I beg you,
Or I shall die of laughing."

A yellow wall
Aflare in the sunlight,
Chequered with shadows,
Shadows of vine leaves,
Shadows of masks.
Masks coming, printing themselves for an instant,
Then passing on,
More masks always replacing them.
Masks with tricorns and rapiers sticking out behind
Pursuing masks with plumes and high heels,
The sunlight shining under their insteps.
One,
One, two,
One, two, three,
There is a thronging of shadows on the hot wall,
Filigreed at the top with moving leaves.
Yellow sunlight and black shadows,
Yellow and black,
Gorgeous -- barbaric.
Two masks stand together,
And the shadow of a leaf falls through them,
Marking the wall where they are not.
From hat-tip to shoulder-tip,
From elbow to sword-hilt,
The leaf falls.
The shadows mingle,
Blur together,
Slide along the wall and disappear.
Gold of mosaics and candles,
And night blackness lurking in the ceiling beams.
Saint Mark's glitters with flames and reflections.
A cloak brushes aside,
And the yellow of satin
Licks out over the coloured inlays of the pavement.
Under the gold crucifixes
There is a meeting of hands
Reaching from black mantles.

Sighing embraces, bold investigations,
Hide in confessionals,
Sheltered by the shuffling of feet.
Gorgeous -- barbaric
In its mail of jewels and gold,
Saint Mark's looks down at the swarm of black masks;
And outside in the palace gardens brown leaves fall,
Flutter,
Fall.
Brown,
And yellow streaked with brown.

Blue-black, the sky over Venice,
With a pricking of yellow stars.
There is no moon,
And the waves push darkly against the prow
Of the gondola,
Coming from Malamocco
And streaming toward Venice.
It is black under the gondola hood,
But the yellow of a satin dress
Glares out like the eye of a watching tiger.
Yellow compassed about with darkness,
Yellow and black,
Gorgeous -- barbaric.
The boatman sings,
It is Tasso that he sings;
The lovers seek each other beneath their mantles,
And the gondola drifts over the lagoon, aslant to the coming dawn.
But at Malamocco in front,
In Venice behind,
Fall the leaves,
Brown,
And yellow streaked with brown.
They fall,
Flutter,
Fall.

From: *Men, Women and Ghosts* by Amy Lowell
Etext #841

SPLEEN.

I'm like some king in whose corrupted veins
Flows aged blood; who rules a land of rains;
Who, young in years, is old in all distress;
Who flees good counsel to find weariness
Among his dogs and playthings, who is stirred
Neither by hunting-hound nor hunting-bird;
Whose weary face emotion moves no more
E'en when his people die before his door.
His favourite Jester's most fantastic wile
Upon that sick, cruel face can raise no smile;
The courtly dames, to whom all kings are good,
Can lighten this young skeleton's dull mood
No more with shameless toilets. In his gloom
Even his liliated bed becomes a tomb.
The sage who takes his gold essays in vain
To purge away the old corrupted strain,
His baths of blood, that in the days of old
The Romans used when their hot blood grew cold,
Will never warm this dead man's bloodless pains,
For green Lethean water fills his veins.

From: *The Poems and Prose Poems of Charles Baudelaire*
EBook #36287

THE MOTH

Isled in the midnight air,
Musked with the dark's faint bloom,
Out into glooming and secret haunts
The flame cries, 'Come!'

Lovely in dye and fan,
A-tremble in shimmering grace,
A moth from her winter swoon
Uplifts her face:

Stares from her glamorous eyes;
Wafts her on plumes like mist;
In ecstasy swirls and sways
To her strange tryst.

By Walter De La Mare, from *Georgian Poetry 1920-22*
Ebook #9640

THE COMPLEX LIFE

I know it to be true that those who live
As do the grasses and the lilies of the field
Receiving joy from Heaven, sweetly yield
Their joy to Earth, and taking Beauty, give.

But we are gathered for the looms of Fate
That Time with ever-turning multiplying wheels
Spins into complex patterns and conceals
His huge invention with forms intricate.

Each generation blindly fills the plan,
A sorry muddle or an inspiration of God
With many processes from out the sod,
The Earth and Heaven are mingled and made man.

We must be tired and sleepless, gaily sad,
Frothing like waves in clamorous confusion,
A chemistry of subtle interfusion,
Experiments of genius that the ignorant call mad.

We spell the crimes of our unruly days,
We see a fabled Arcady in our mind,
We crave perfection that we may not find.
Time laughs within the clock and Destiny plays.

You peasants and you hermits, simple livers!
So picturesquely pure, all unconcerned
While we give up our bodies to be burned,
And dredge for treasure in the muddy rivers.

We drink and die and sell ourselves for power,
We hunt with treacherous steps and stealthy knife,
We make a gaudy havoc of our life
And live a thousand ages in an hour.

Our loves are spoilt by introspective guile,
We vivisect our souls with elaborate tools,
We dance in couples to the tune of fools,
And dream of harassed continents the while.

Subconscious visions hold us and we fashion
Delirious verses, tortured statues, spasms of paint,
Make cryptic perorations of complaint,
Inverted religion, and perverted passion.

But since we are children of this age,
In curious ways discovering salvation,
I will not quit my muddled generation,
But ever plead for Beauty in this rage.

Although I know that Nature's bounty yields
Unto simplicity a beautiful content,
Only when battle breaks me and my strength is spent
Will I give back my body to the fields.

1917

from: *Poems*, by Iris Tree
EBook #45643

CALLED BACK.

Just lost when I was saved!
Just felt the world go by!
Just girt me for the onset with eternity,
When breath blew back,
And on the other side
I heard recede the disappointed tide!

Therefore, as one returned, I feel,
Odd secrets of the line to tell!
Some sailor, skirting foreign shores,
Some pale reporter from the awful doors
Before the seal!

Next time, to stay!
Next time, the things to see
By ear unheard,
Unscrutinized by eye.

Next time, to tarry,
While the ages steal, --
Slow tramp the centuries,
And the cycles wheel.

From: *Poems: Three Series, Complete*, by Emily Dickinson
EBook #12242

IL BACIO

KISS! Hollyhock in Love's luxuriant close!
Brisk music played on pearly little keys;
In tempo with the witching melodies
Love in the ardent heart repeating goes.

Sonorous, graceful Kiss, hail! Kiss divine!
Unequalled boon, unutterable bliss!
Man, bent o'er thine entralling chalice, Kiss,
Grows drunken with a rapture only thine!

Thou comfortest as music does, and wine,
And grief dies smothered in thy purple fold.
Let one greater than I, Kiss, and more bold,
Rear thee a classic, monumental line.

Humble Parisian bard, this infantile
Bouquet of rhymes I tender half in fear. . . .
Be gracious, and in guerdon, on the dear
Red lips of One I know, a light and smile!
Paul Verlaine.

from: *A Vers de Société Anthology*, by Various
EBook #48059



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